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ABSTRACT

This paper, in making several proposals for improving university design to meet the needs of students, urges that students be given a greater role in planning physical facilities. The following proposals are made: (1) No rigid line of demarcation should be drawn between living and working facilities; (2) the design should provide for a maximum number of students, teachers, and staff to live within the university complex; (3) budgeted money should be expended in construction of self-contained apartments rather than in the building of halls, common rooms, or large central libraries; (4) the university should merge with its urban environment and represent an "urban solution to an urban problem"; and (5) academic space should never be assigned permanently to any one discipline. (JF)

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RADICAL NEW PROGRAMS FOR UNIVERSITY LIVING

The need to change Universities is a world-wide phenomena. Young people have emerged as a dominant new social force.

Their needs are not being met by our University institutions, no more so than in Canada.

The older Canadian universities have been said to be "conglomerations of Gothic remnants and Georgian compromise".

Their establishment was certainly based upon the model of the medieval residential college, however transmuted by reasons of time and colonial expediency.

They were an appendage of an aristocracy that accepted few social responsibilities and many prerogatives. They were paternalistic and aristocratic but did represent the idea of "living as a learning experience", however narrow and elevated.

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Such institutions survived for a comparatively short time. The towns in which they had been established grew to cities and the pressure to grow and change was intense.

New ideas and new needs were met with new disciplines. The community of the residential college was replaced by the dichotomy of the academic institution and the hall of residence. The concept of living and learning replaced by the polarity of labour and leisure.

The institutions most involved with this changing concept were those located in larger centres of population. They could best serve and be supported by the emerging day student constituency interested in the university as a vocational training centre.

The growth since World War II has been rapid. Prior to 1958 there were five Universities in Ontario with a full time enrolment of 22,000. By this year there were 14 with 100,000 enrolment. It is now growing at the rate of 10,000 per year.

The University of Toronto, of which I am a member, was chartered in 1849. It is now a federation of colleges, schools and faculties and has grown to 50,000 population, a modest example of the modern multiversity.

But what of the quality of life in such an institution. The original residential colleges have remained, but with a diminished role, their ranks swollen by the admission of affiliated day students. The professional schools and liberal arts colleges, responsible only for academic programs, have assumed a major role. Life and residence is really divorced from both. Students able to escape from their parents' home take up residence in a variety of accommodation. The surrounding precinct of decaying 19th century private dwellings has become a harbour of rooms, flats, boarding house fraternity and sorority houses, dormitories and hostels. To meet the campus needs of these off campus dwellers the phenomena of the central library and central student union were established as the two poles of student activity.

In the meantime the faculty disappeared into the sanctuary of its tutorial offices and the middle class residential suburb.

This was the general pattern up to the late 50's. At this time there developed a pressing need to expand facilities to accommodate the World War II offspring of the newly affluent middle class. Established universities such as Toronto doubled and tripled their academic facilities, small parochial institutions such as McMaster in Hamilton suddenly became non denominational and multi-disciplinary and whole new universities were created overnight.

The capital and operating cost of such expansion was funded by government and for the first time there was an expanded federal system of student support in the form of loans and grants.

How was all this carried out? Initiation or expansion of academic programs might be the concern of faculty in the beginning but implementation of physical programs and the committment of the capital support was the exclusive prerogative of senior administration, the boards of governors and finally government. The consumers - that is the students - or the community had no role whatsoever in the process.

The results are tragic. The goals were to achieve an order of physical structure in which universities were perceived as an interrelation of building forms, separating and emphasizing particular operations in spheres of academic territory. The needs of <u>people</u> in terms of the complex interaction of the learning process are rarely considered and then only in terms of simple recreational distraction. This concept of segregation, isolation and polarization of activities creates a community of strangers, not friends and neighbours.

Relations with the immediate community have been equally disastrous. The new institutions have generally opted for open

suburban land. While this allows considerable freedom of physical design, they have no benefit of social support from established community facilities. In the case of the University of Toronto it has carried out its expansion with an autocratic and arrogant disdain supported by its powers of expropriation. The result is that valuable residential communities are being destroyed within the core of the city. Such practice must stop.

In the new as well as the older universities, housing has a diminished role that implies that it is not essential to the goals of the university. It has assumed a peripheral position both socially and physically. Residence facilities are not shared with the rest of the university community and day students feel excluded. Associations established in halls of residence tend to be of short duration and are soon replaced through common interest. People leave residence after a year or two to pursue a freer life.

If traditional programs meet contemporary needs so inadequately, what are the alternatives.

About two and a half years ago some young associates and I became involved as consultants to the Students' Administrative

Council of the University of Toronto. A housing crisis had developed, and the council was dissatisfied with the efforts of the university to meet it both in quantity and quality. The Council had command of substantial resources and a team of specialists was assembled to work with the students to carry out a unique program of investigation and analyses of student housing needs. The team included architects, engineers, sociologists, psychologists, statisticians, construction and realty specialists. The results were quite astounding.

The concept of the university as a sanctuary of the social and intellectual elite was dead.

Students were now derived from a broad spectrum of society. Government concern with education had created a new constituency, young men and women who in another time would have never dreamt of university. They arrive on campus from all sectors of society and with all the diversity and dependence that represents. What this all meant in terms of practical programs was that traditional university concepts of residential colleges and their offspring, the "Hall of Residence" were quite unacceptable to 85% of students. Women, even more than men, rejected them. The University role of "in loco parentis" was quite outdated. Students were prepared to accept nothing less than the role of

young, responsible adults. They were so exacerbated by the restrictive, monotonous, regimented sterility of most academic programs that they chose as a majority to live off campus and to disassociate their dwelling from the university. This has also been the response at most of the new universities where the opportunity was available.

They want self-contained apartments of various bedroom configuration, but never accommodating more than eight people. There is a strong desire to be able to lead a private life of choice and a public life supported by a community facilities of casual use.

The program was carried to the stage of economic feasibility and it was determined that such housing could be provided at no more cost than conventional university programs.

Subsequently, we have been involved in some way with students and their housing needs at five other places. The most significant work however, has been at McMaster University in Hamilton.

We were retained by the McMaster Student Union to work with them in the design of a program of investigation that would determine their long range housing and community needs. This program has

been implemented by the university itself under the direction of a President's Committee representing students, faculty and administration. We are in the final stages of the program.

All of this experience has lead me to some conclusions about the need for a significantly different concept of university and more particularly for a totally new attitude to the role of housing.

We are all aware of the emerging world community of students. Their needs and expectations are radically different and our universities are changing and must change to meet them.

The traditional concept of the University as a place of withdrawal from ordinary society will not disappear entirely, but the concept of the university as a vocational training institution is rapidly being replaced by direct social involvement at all levels of society.

The physical response to such changing needs will also be radically different. The type of planning that emphasizes the separation of activities within the university community must be scrapped.

Academic freedom will mean an increasing freedom of choice. Choice of discipline, choice of program, choice of schedule, choice of technique, choice of group. Freedom to work alone, or together in small groups or large. The choice to work or not. The choice to explore, to experiment, to change objectives and interests. The choice to discover.

Such freedom in turn will generate new social attitudes, new patterns, new modes.

In the new university there will be no rigid demarcation - between where people work and where they live. Provision will be made for the maximum number of students, teachers and staff to live within the university. Academic space will no longer be assigned as the exclusive territory of particular disciplines. Rather a complement of space hierarchies will be provided, receptive to the needs of changing programs.

The physical planning should not try to establish the size, shape, and appearance of future buildings. Rather it should develop a method by which a complexity of needs can be met within an organized framework. At all times it should be capable of growth and change.

Dwelling will become the core function and community focus. It will assume a key role in the educational process. Housing will move from its present peripheral and secondary position to one of prominence.

The monotony, regimentation and anonymity of "Hall of Residence" living will be replaced by a wide variety of situations, much if not most of it of a self-contained nature.

There will be choice suitable to a wide range of personalities. The security of privacy and self-dependence will be complemented by the dynamics of community facilities structured for casual use. The street will replace the campus, the cafe the lounge, the restaurant the dining hall, the lunch stand the vending machine.

There will be a complex inter-weaving of all those facilities and functions that support the widest variety of needs and events.

The central library, no longer a symbol of authority, will become a dispersed system of information retrieval, the books safe once again in a simple warehouse. Academic space will become simple, flexible work space in a subsidiary position. The athletic complex will become a series of health clubs,

athletic events a function of the community at large. The mind dulling "banality" of "collegiate" activities will be banished. The university will merge with its urban environment; no longer a cultural island. It will represent an "urban solution to an urban problem".

In Canada the period for establishing new universities is over for the present. The opportunity to create new patterns of development will be limited to satellite institutions. The real task is one of attempting to modify the existing institutions, of trying to achieve some degree of relevance for an almost totally different generation.

To this end I would make the following suggestions:

1. That all attempts at change involve all the people concerned in direct participation.

2. Academic space must be liberated. It should not be assigned permanently to any particular discipline. Large schools and faculties should be dispersed. New groupings of modest size should be created. Every function or activity should be moved at least once every three years.

3. Movement spaces should become streets with casual activity generators their matrix. Academic space adjoining such "streets" should revert to "positive foreground", that is space for community use.

4. New forms of housing and support facilities should be developed in core locations in direct response to the "street" system. Existing and in most cases, obsolete housing in peripheral locations should be demolished or given to the community at large.

5. The automobile should be banished to the community at large.

6. Student unions, faculty clubs and all the apparatus of paternity and privilege should be shut down and converted to other use. Those facilities that encourage or emphasize "collegiate" impulses should be discouraged.

7. And finally, wherever possible there should be a return to the original concept of university as a place of "living and learning".

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RADICAL NEW PROGRAMS FOR UNIVERSITY LIVING.

PRESENTATION AT NEOCON II CONFERENCE, CHICAGO, JUNE 1970

George Robb, a Toronto architect and University of Toronto professor, has radical ideas on university design that challenge present day theories.

Speaking at Neocon, a big institutional furniture and furnishings show in Chicago, he made the following points:

More use should be made of present university space. Facilities should not be the property of any one discipline.

There should be no rigid demarcation between where people work and where they live.

Provision should be made for the maximum number of students, teachers and staff to live within the university.

Students want self-contained apartments and want the budgeted money spent for this rather than on halls, common rooms, or a large central prestigious library.

The role of a university of "in loco parentis" is outdated.

Students need to be treated as adults so that they behave as adults.

ABSTRACT.

Robb said that the older Canadian universities have been called "conglomerations of Gothic remnants and Georgian compromise". He said that their establishment was based upon the model of the medieval residential college, transmuted by reasons of time and colonial expediency. They were an appendage of an aristocracy that accepted few social responsibilities and many prerogatives.

Since World War II there has been a rapid growth of students and a break with the idea of a university education for the elite only. Students are now derived from a broad spectrum of society. "Government concern with education has created a new constituency, young men and women who, in another time, would never have dreamt of university. They arrive on campus from all sectors of society and with all the diversity and dependence that represents."

Robb's use of a comprehensive questionnaire to discover what present day students really want and need from a university has made a major impact on North American university design philosophy. As opposed to looking at what has been done in the past, he asks the question, what do today's students need right now?

George Robb is at present working on the final stages of a program at McMaster University. He is analysing long range housing and community needs there.

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